10b Marshall M-8 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

CHAPTER I

HABITAT AND TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE KAREN

101 131 The Karen are a group of Indo-Chinese tribes living principally in Burma, the easternmost province of the British Indian Empire, in the Indo-Chinese peninsula, and in the adjoining country of Siam to the east. They are found between the tenth and twenty-first degrees of north latitude and between the ninety-fourth and one hundredth degrees of east longitude. The greater part of this territory they occupy in connection with the other peoples of the country, namely, the Burmese, Shan, Siamese, and Chin. 642 The only exclusively Karen country is the hilly region of the Toungoo district and the Karenni subdivision, where the Karen chiefs 161 of five states, comprising 4,830 square miles and a population of 42,240, are still in power under the Advisory Council of the British [563] Government. There is also a Karen chief ruling one of the Shan States, and five other states in that section are ruled by Taungthu chiefs. In all these latter districts we find a mixed population.[1]

101 197 The whole group of Karen tribes can be divided into three divisions, according to their language or dialect differences. These are the Sgaw, Pwo, and Bwe groups.

The Sgaw group is the largest and most widely scattered. They are found all through the Irrawaddy Delta, from the vicinity of Prome southward, and from the Arracan coast eastward to the neighborhood of Lakong in Siam and southward to the lowest point of the British possessions. The Paku and Mawnepgha tribes of the southern Toungoo Hills belong to this group. One dialect, with only slight variations, is used throughout this region.

The Pwo group comprises, besides the Pwo Karen, the Taungthu tribe, who call themselves the Pao. The Pwo are found along the seacoast from Arracan to Mergui and are said to be found nowhere more than fifty miles inland. However, I think that some of the Pwo villages in the Henzada district may be a little farther inland than that. The Taungthu are found in a section of country

[1] J. E. Scott: *Burma*, Appendix, pp. 479-481.

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

running northward from Thaton into the Shan States beyond Taunggyi.

The Bwe tribes are found in the vicinity of Toungoo, in the territory extending from the foothills east of that city throughout the Karenni subdivision. This is a very mountainous region, and we find the people broken up into small tribes differing from one another in dialect, dress, and customs. Nine of these tribes were enumerated in the last Government census. The tendency of the present time is to consider these tribes more closely related than was formerly the case.

In the *Census Report* of the Government of India for the year 1911 we have the first enumeration of all Karens in the British territory. In former reports the Karenni territory was not included in the enumeration. The returns in 1911 showed a population of 1,102,695. This was an increase of 199,334 over the previous count in 1901, due in part to the increased extent of the territory covered. The enumeration, however, did not clearly distinguish between the Pwo and Sgaw branches of the race, due, as the *Report* says, to the fact that many returned themselves simply as Karens, without specifying to which branch they belonged. The total number of Pwos and Sgaws increased from 717,859 souls in 1901 to 872,825 in 1911, a gain of 154,966. This represents a real increase in population, for these tribes are all in Burma proper. The Pwo dialect is less persistent than the Sgaw, for more of its members are using Burmese to a much greater degree than the Sgaws, although the latter are also giving up their language where they are living in close contact with the Burmans. The Sgaw dialect is not "driving out the Pwo" as rumor says, but is merely holding its own better against the Burmese. Probably there are about half a million Sgaws in Burma and perhaps another 50,000 in Siam,[2] which would make them the most numerous branch of the race. The Taungthu were enumerated by themselves and, as has been said above, belong to the Pwo group. There were 183,054 of them in 1911. During the decade previous to that enumeration they had made an increase of 14,753 souls. The Pwo group would probably include altogether about 350,000 members and would stand second in point of numbers.[3]

[2] W. A. Graham, in the *Handbook of Siam*, estimates the Karen of that country at 70,000, but I think this estimate rather low.

[3] These citations are all from the *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. IX, pp. 275, ff.

M:Marshall M-5(ca.1910)1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

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161

The Bwe group is more definitely treated in the *Census Report*, for in this group each tribe is enumerated separately, as follows:

Karenni	19,008
Karennet	3,721
Karenbyu	790
Zayein	4,981
Sinsin	533
Bre	6,911
Mano	1,445
Yinbaw	911
Padaung	8,516
Total	46,816

These tribes,[4] dwelling in the heart of the Karen country where they have been secure in the fastnesses of their native hills, have never before been counted with enough exactness to allow us to estimate their increase in numbers. There is no doubt that the general impression that they are really increasing is correct. Further investigation may show that some of these tribes as, for example, the Zayein, may be allied to non-Karen stock, such as the Wa of the Shan States.[5]

These Bwe tribes form a distinct group, but it is beyond the purpose of this present work to deal in particular with them, especially since they have already formed the subject of a study incorporated in the *Upper Burma Gazetteer*.[6]

[4] Karenni means literally Red Karen, in Burmese. It has been used of the tribe dwelling in the country now called by that name, because they wear red clothing. Similarly some writers have spoken of the White Karen and the Black Karen, "Karenbyu" and "Karennet."

[5] Rev. W. H. Young, formerly of Kentung, tells me that the Wa language resembles the Karen in structure but not in vocabulary, while the Lahu and Pwo Karen have similar customs and vocabulary but a different sentence structure.

[6] Vol. I, Pt. I, Chapter IX.

342 The houses of the Padaung, another Karen tribe--1911: 8,516--are quite similar. The [301] Padaung women represent an amusing ethnographical parallel to the African Massai, with their solid heavy brass ornaments and their tremendous collars. Sometimes the Padaung form a village [621] community together with the Yimbaw-Karen (24)

24. About Yimbaw-Karen see UBG, I, 1, p. 524.

as in the villages of Naungswe near Mobye on the Nam Pilu. The place looked cleaner to me than the Karenni villages and their houses were better constructed (Plate VII, 3). A round awning covers the veranda; the single inside room is used for cooking, living, and sleeping. In [354] the center are two fireplaces which are sunk into the floor; on both sides are sleeping accommodations. Alongside the wall the floor is raised to form a low platform where vessels and all sorts of implements are kept. At the rear, to [514] the right, a bamboo screen, reaching half way to the ceiling, partitions off a kind of toilet which is an opening in the floor.

101 The Gaungto--(Sawng-tung-Zayein-) Karen--
●161 1911: 4,981--belong to a tribal group where
582 more or less severe endogamic marriage rules limit the establishment of families, and this in turn has resulted in a steady decrease of the population. Consequently, one frequently finds in their villages a large number of old maids and bachelors who were unable to find suitable mates for themselves. For example, I counted in one little village, consisting only of six houses, not more than four married couples, and their families. In addition, there was one widow, and four girls and four bachelors who, because of lack of money or because of the marriage rules, had to remain single.

344 The bachelor house, a customary institution
883